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96
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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NURSING EDUCATION :
A CRITICAL APPROACH

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RGON MA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates tutors' and students' experiences of teaching and learning nursing during the final year of one three year comprehensive (polytechnic) nursing course. The use of critical social science exposes for critique the ways in which sociopolitical forces constrain individual and professional action. The critical reflexive analysis of the perceptions of nine tutors and thirty eight students illustrate the ways in which dominant ideologies embedded in the social practices of nursing education and health care shape the consciousness of tutors and students towards conformity, compliance and passivity.

Although previous studies provide useful descriptions of socialisation and educational processes, they overlook the importance of the reflexivity of understanding and action, and of the structural constraints in nursing education and practice. By focussing on either individual agency and deficiencies, or on bureaucratic conditions of education and practice, previous studies directed attention away from generating the political knowledge which may have assisted nurses to overcome some of the contradictory and constraining conditions of their practice.

It is the political processes of teaching and learning and their practical effects which are revealed for critique and transformation using a critical reflexive methodology. It is claimed that this methodology motivates research participants themselves to become aware that their preconceptions are shaped by aspects of the prevailing social order such that they are prevented from achieving their nursing ideals and educational goals. Thus, through the processes involved in becoming socially critical, tutors and students would be able to transform those sociopolitical

constraints. Although collective political action is not fully demonstrated in the time frame of this study, it is suggested that engaging in this research has had ongoing liberating effects for the participants.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
PART ONE - INTRODUCTION	
CHAPTER ONE - The Context	2
Historical and educational issues and thesis outline	2
Formal nursing curricula	8
Graduate employment	12
Professional socialisation	13
Thesis Outline	17
PART TWO - THEORY AND METHOD	
CHAPTER TWO - Previous Studies	22
Empirico analytical studies and interpretive studies	22
Empirico analytical studies	24
focal points of empirico-analytical studies	27
The interpretive tradition	32
studies of nurses in the interpretive tradition	34
challenges to interpretivism	37
Critical social science	39
studies using a critical theory approach	40
Summary	43
CHAPTER THREE - Critical Social Theory	44
Critical theory - a general outline	44
Challenges to critical social theory	48
Critical theory and nursing education	50
culture	51
culture and the hidden curriculum	52
relations of power	59
emancipatory knowledge and communicative competence	64
hegemony	69
ideology	72
Summary	75

CHAPTER FOUR - The Research Process	76
Introduction	76
The specific context of this study	76
the sites	76
the participants	77
the curriculum	79
the fieldwork	80
The discourse	83
the interviews	85
the journals	87
Objectivity and subjectivity in research	89
Ethical concerns:	
confidentiality, negotiation and reciprocity	92
Validity concerns	96
Summary	98

PART THREE - THE RESEARCH ACCOUNT

Introduction to Chapters Five and Six	100
CHAPTER FIVE - Tutor Discourse	104
The experience of reflexivity	105
the past	105
the present	107
the future	114
Reproducing cultural knowledge	118
knowledge as information	119
student centred learning	120
knowledge through enquiry	125
knowledge through dialogue	127
Classroom and clinical experience:	
working in two worlds	130
Summary	143
CHAPTER SIX - Student Discourse	145
Themes	145
Student centred versus tutor directed learning	146
Reproducing nursing culture	152
specific classroom experiences	154
examinations	154
specific clinical experiences	155
power and conformity	158
classroom and clinical congruence	161
separation of theory from practice	164
developing professional competence	167
Tutor-student relationships	170
Post graduate employment	174
Summary	177

CHAPTER SEVEN - Further Interpretation and Discussion	179
Hegemony and consciousness	184
Cultural paradox and compliance	187
Sociopolitical domination	189
Knowledge and power	193
Tutor - student relations of power	197
CHAPTER EIGHT - Revisiting the Study	201
Concluding Statement	206
APPENDICES	
1. Massey University Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects	208
2. Consent Form	211
3. Project Timetable	212
4.1 Interview Transcript - tutor	215
4.2 Interview Transcript - student group	231
5. Field Notes	247
6. Letters to Participants	250
REFERENCES	254